

(Washington D.C.) - Congressman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott, (D-VA-3), last night opposed a Republican bill that severely decreases student aid and funds for important social service programs. Couched as an effort to reduce the federal budget, the plan cuts spending by about \$50 billion dollars; however, it also cuts taxes by nearly \$70 billion dollars for a net increase in the deficit of \$20 billion. Most of this tax cut will be pocketed by the wealthiest one percent in the country.

"The bill cuts student aid by \$14.3 billion dollars, saddling students with an additional debt of up to \$5800 on top of the \$17,500 already owed by the on the average student borrower," said Rep. Scott. "The result is that financial barriers will prevent over four million high school graduates from attending college over the next decade, and it will only get worse before it gets better." Rep. Scott was referring to the fact that the cost of attending a public four-year college has risen \$3000 over the last five years, yet there has been no increase in Pell grants.

This cut is particularly egregious in light of the two tax cuts that will go into effect on January 1, 2006, estimated to be worth \$200 billion over five years. Under these tax cuts, those making over \$1 million - less than 1% of those filing taxes -- will get the bulk of the benefit with approximately \$19,000 each. Meanwhile, those making under \$75,000 a year will get no benefit; \$75,000 to \$100,000 will on average receive a \$1.00 benefit; \$100,000 to \$200,000 will receive an average of \$25; \$200,000 to \$500,000 will get about \$500; and \$500,000 to \$1 million will receive just over \$4,000 on average. "In other words, we are giving tax cuts to the rich at the expense of our students," Rep. Scott explained. "We are limiting the ability of the next generation to participate in our global economy while saddling them with our growing debt."

In addition to the raid on student aid, the bill cuts health care for our poorest children, decreases the food stamp program, and dramatically reduces the child support upon which single parents depend. "This is not the right vision for the future and we can do better," insisted Rep. Scott. "The American dream is about providing opportunities, not obstacles. I am committed to fighting these misplaced priorities."

The bill passed the U.S. House of Representatives by a margin of only two votes. Democrats unanimously opposed the bill and were joined by fourteen Republicans and one Independent.

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